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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRATISLAVA 000432

SIPDIS

FOR EUR/NCE

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TAGS: PHUM PINR KDEM KPAO LO

SUBJECT: ROMA POLITICAL POLLING SHOWS DISCREPANCY BETWEEN  
PUBLIC OPINION AND PRIVATE PRACTICES

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires A.I. Scott N. Thayer for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: National Democratic Institute (NDI) Roma Political Participation program advisors told Poloff that recent polling data showed commonly held perceptions of Roma political affiliation, involvement, and participation were false. Some of this data, they claimed, could be damaging to the Roma community in Slovakia, as it demonstrated that the Roma do not represent the large, undecided voting block that current political parties assume, but rather are largely aligned with leftist parties. They are very much influenced by their financial situation. NDI fears this information, if made public, would discourage political parties from seeking support among an "already committed" voting block. END SUMMARY.

THE ROMA LIKE MECIAR AND FICO...

2. (C) The polling data, conducted via statistical sampling by the Institute for Public Affairs (IVO), revealed that over 40 percent of Roma sympathize with HZDS, the party of former prime minister Vladimir Meciar. The next largest voting block is aligned with Smer (whose leader, Robert Fico, famously suggested that Roma should be placed in reeducation camps), and to the surprise of NDI, six percent of Roma even expressed support for SNS (the "Slovak National Party"), whose supporters include some "white supremacists." Polling data also showed, however, that the Roma remain a relatively uneducated electorate; they are frequently motivated to vote because of misperceptions about legal penalties for not voting, and their party loyalties seem largely affected by the views of their family elders. (COMMENT: Smer historically polls better than it performs in elections. END COMMENT)

...BUT ALSO SUPPORT "FAMOUS" ROMA ON TV

3. (C) NDI's polling suggested that the "public figures" the Roma felt best represented them were Roma themselves. The young Roma man who recently appeared on the hit television show "Slovak Superstar" received the most support as a representative of the Roma community. He is followed closely by Vladimir Sendrej, who appeared on the Slovak television program "Wife Swap." Sendrej is frequently approached on the street by Slovaks who say that seeing him on TV "completely changed" the way they thought about Roma.

4. (C) NDI told Poloff that they expect to keep some of the results of the polling secret, though they are also planning on doing a public release of other parts of the data which they feel could influence and promote the further participation of Roma in the political process, while at the same time motivating current political parties to more actively engage the Roma community.

COMMENT  
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5. (C) This data was prepared by NDI to complement the current training they are conducting for 20 young Roma who they hope will run for elected office in November's regional elections; so far, they tell the Embassy that they have four candidates from the group "committed" to running, and that they expect others -- including TV star Sendrej -- to try for public office.  
THAYER

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